

OPINION

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Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We need more doctors, nurses, better use of space

Re: Hospitals eye 3 per cent tax levy, June 7.

As a taxpayer and having worked in the building of expansions of hospitals for more than 30 years, I oppose a hospital levy.

This will never see any improvements for hospitals, like the famed gas tax that was supposed to be used to repair our roads.

The hospitals within York Region have beds that are often not even used.

What we need is more staff doctors and nurses and a better use of existing square footage.

At best, this should be a provincial responsibility, with out-sourcing to smaller satellite offices or even in large malls for minor medical conditions.

I don't believe it should be considered as an endless pit of money, always tapping the taxpayer for whatever comes along.

JOE SARINO
MARKHAM

We already pay health tax

Re: Hospitals eye 3 per cent tax levy, June 7.
We are against another levy of taxes. We are in our late 70s and depend on the hospital, but already pay a health tax for

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this purpose. The provincial government is responsible for seeing this money is used to expand our hospital.

Our own Markham council should stop building until the infrastructure (number of beds per 1,000 people) has caught up with the expansion.

SYLVIA AND PETER KOENS
MARKHAM

Let government, hospitals live within their means

Re: Hospitals eye 3 per cent tax levy, June 7.
I am opposed to any further tax increases in any form. Canadians are over taxed already and this is another form of tax grab. Governments and public institutions should learn to live within their means instead of looking at tax money as a bottomless pit.

ASHOKA KAMINOULU
MARKHAM



T-shirt, shorts? Don't mind me, I work from home

I took time during lunch on Monday to check out a district track meet in Stouffville and I have the sunburn on my nose to prove it.

My younger son was in an event and he didn't want me to miss it. I've missed a lot of similar events in which he's been involved.

Besides, Father's Day is coming up and I wouldn't want to be in his bad books. I might miss out on some boffo gift, like breakfast in bed (although he's too young to really take command of the stove for bacon and eggs) or a certificate worth three hours of snoring on the couch, waking up periodically to see how far ahead or behind Tiger Woods is in the U.S. Open.

Grade school track and field, in case you don't remember it, involves quite a bit of running of various distances, but also includes many less glamorous events that they won't be hosting in Beijing, such as standing longjump, softball toss, and hop, skip and trip, skip, step and stumble, hop, trip and tumble, or whatever you want to call it (at least that's what appeared to be happening from my vantage point), not to be confused with triple jump.

Fortunately, they had some nice soft sand in which to land.

This is not to say the kids were not great. They wore their school colours with pride. They were the children of people who'd come to Canada from the four corners of the planet and looked beautiful out there on the fields, short, tall, blond hair, black hair, fair skin, dark skin and every shade in between.

These were their own little Olympic qualifiers, York Region style.

Many of the kids could run like the wind, jump like they had spring-loaded shoes and throw the ball like future major leaguers.

The teachers were doing a great job but as can be expected when you have 1,000 children to mind, things can get behind schedule. Which is how my nose ended up looking like a cooked lobster claw.

My son's event happened an hour after it was scheduled, so I spent an hour in the midday sun.

I was standing there in my work attire — shirt and tie, dress shoes — and, of course, no baseball cap or sunscreen.

What was interesting was there were a lot of other dads there, several of whom I recognized from the



Bernie O'Neill

school and town and hockey and so on. They were wearing shorts and T-shirts and sandals. Which I interpreted to be something other than work attire, unless they are in a Beach Boys cover band or maybe professional lifeguards.

So I asked one of them, "You got the day off?"

"No, I work from home," said one guy I recognized from hockey.

Later I asked another one, who was standing near me watching our sons race. "Not working today?"

"Oh, I work from home. I'll catch up a little later," he said.

(I always thought a guy saying, "I work from home," was a euphemism for, "My wife has a really good job so I don't have to work." But that's just me being jealous.)

How many of these guys are there, working from home?

Quite a few, if I simply count from among the dads whose sons play baseball or hockey with my two boys in Stouffville.

Some of them are self-employed, but several work for companies that seem happy to have them working out of home offices, as long, I guess, as they see results.

The bonus for them is they are close to their kids and can take a bit of time here and there to witness those milestone events and make up the time later.

They are the ones able to coach hockey at odd hours like before 5 p.m. on a weekday, or go to school events in the middle of the day, because they have the flexibility of being self-employed or working for a company that has no problem with a home office.

Could that work mode be in your future? I read a story this week out of Florida, where the \$1.35 a litre we pay for gas translates into a nice, round and psychologically significant \$4 a gallon, where the state is encouraging some employees to work a four-day week with longer days or to work from home.

More than 20 per cent of those eligible have already signed up.

"Everybody's hurting and every day it gets worse," one Miami-Dade commissioner said. "All I hear is people talking about gas and food prices going up."

Many workplaces and manager types — myself included — are skeptical about whether or not people working from home are putting in as much effort as those in the office. (We always imagine they're shuffling around in their pyjamas, sipping tea and watching Oprah.)

For some jobs, it's not easy to measure output unless they are right there with you. Communications suffer, teams don't work as well together. Or at least that's the belief. So their workers come in every day, even when the cost of office space is high.

But if gas prices go any higher, like the \$1.50 a litre predicted, views may soften — at least a little, especially if the workers start complaining or clamouring for a raise.

Many York Region residents drive a long way to a workplace, only to sit in front of a computer all day or talk on the phone — two tasks that could be done from anywhere.

LETTERS POLICY

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